

Writing Conference Prompts

Start with What the Writing Does

- ☐ I love the way your first sentence. . . .
- ☐ Your story reminded me of. . . .
- ☐ I could picture exactly how. . . .
- ☐ When you said [blank], I felt. . . .
- ☐ Your dad is going to treasure this piece because. . . .
- ☐ I noticed that. . . .
- ☐ I really like the way you used conversation to let the reader know exactly how you felt. It seemed as if I were right there in the room with you.

Then Move to What the Writing Has

- ☐ You tried out conversation.
- ☐ You skipped lines so you could add in easily.
- ☐ You spaced your words, which makes it easy for the reader to read your message.
- ☐ I like the way you used the word [blank] instead of [blank].

Encourage Your Youngest Writers and Your Developing Writers

- ☐ I like how you were stretching out your sounds as you wrote.
- ☐ I saw you looking at the word wall to figure out a word. Good for you.
- ☐ You're spacing better between words. That makes it easier for the reader.
- ☐ You drew your picture first, and that got you going on your story.
- ☐ I noticed you were using your reading finger to be sure your voice and your words matched.
- ☐ I love the way your picture has lots of information in it.
- ☐ You're continuing your story from yesterday. That's great.
- ☐ Say your words slowly as you write them. That will help you hear more sounds.

Use Language that Encourages and Clarifies

- ☐ I really like how you. . . .
- ☐ So you're saying. . . .
- ☐ Perhaps you could try. . . .
- ☐ Can you say more about. . . ?
- ☐ How about if you. . . ?
- ☐ You might want to. . . .
- ☐ Think about. . . .
- ☐ Let's try this together. . . .

- ☐ I'm confused here. I'm not sure what you're trying to say. I think you need to. . . .
- ☐ Let me show you how to. . . .
- ☐ Try another lead that. . . .
- ☐ You've got too many "tired" words. Reread and see if you can't replace some of those with more lively language. Let's try one together.
- ☐ Your piece ends abruptly. Let's talk about an ending that could work.
- ☐ Reread your piece before you start writing again.
- ☐ Why don't you try. . . ?
- ☐ Show me where you say. . . .
- ☐ Explain. . . .
- ☐ Check the criteria we've established. Make sure you've done everything that's required.
- ☐ One thing writers do when they want to [blank] is. . . . Here's what I mean.

Regie Routmann
Writing Essentials

What It Sounds Like to Focus on Content

- ☐ *Think about how you can begin your writing so your reader knows exactly what you're writing about.*
- ☐ *When you get stuck, read over what you've written so far. You might need to reread a few times to get ideas to get going again.*
- ☐ *Sometimes it's easier to hear how your writing sounds if you quietly read it out loud to yourself.*
- ☐ *Make sure your writing makes sense and is easy to understand.*
- ☐ *Always keep your reader in mind as you are writing.*
- ☐ *I noticed you tried . . . when you got stuck. That's what good writers do.*
- ☐ *I saw you reading over what you wrote yesterday before you started writing today. That helps your thinking get going and helps you decide what you want to say next. Good for you.*
- ☐ *Make sure your lead catches the reader's attention and makes it clear what you're writing about. You may want to try writing another lead or two and see which one works best.*
- ☐ *Will the reader know your piece is finished? Do you have a satisfying and interesting ending that ties everything together?*

What it sounds like to focus on editing

- ☐ *I can tell you've reread your writing over and over again.*
- ☐ *Good for you. You've circled all the misspelled words you could find and corrected most of them. I'll fix the rest of these "for free."*
- ☐ *I'm going to put the editing mark for a new paragraph here because you're changing subjects. When you do your final copy, be sure to indent here to let the reader know it's a new paragraph.*
- ☐ *I'm putting commas here because writers use commas to. . .*
- ☐ *We capitalize words in a title, like this.*
- ☐ *I'm changing this from be to is so it sounds right.*

Then, make one or two specific comments and stop the conference:

- ☐ *There are two words in this line that are misspelled. Fix them up.*
- ☐ *I've just read three lines, and I see missing punctuation and capitalization.*
- ☐ *I see capital letters in the middle of words.*
- ☐ *You circled misspelled words, but you also need to make some attempt on correcting some of those.*
- ☐ *I need to see the work you've done. Don't erase. Cross out.*
- ☐ *What do you know about capitals in a title?*
- ☐ *I still see spelling words I know you can fix up.*
- ☐ *You have missing punctuation in this line.*
- ☐ *You're missing periods in several places.*
- ☐ *Go back to our editing expectations sheet, and make sure you've done everything that's on it.*
- ☐ *I will meet with you after you've done everything you can as an editor.*

Once students assume responsibility for their own editing, I make comments like these:

- ☐ *You've done a great job editing. Tell me some of the things you were able to do on your own (affirms the student and encourages ongoing independence).*
- ☐ *I notice you've added carets to add in information, circled all your misspelled words, fixed up most of your misspelled words, added capitals to the beginning every sentence, etc.] (recognizes student's efforts and skills, and encourages repeated student responsibility for editing).*
- ☐ *You're so close here. Let me show you. . . (lets student know she can count on teacher help once she's done her best work).*
- ☐ *What do you think you can fix up on your own? (lets student know you expect*